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THE IMMANENT INTERIOR

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The notion of *immanence* is recognised as being central to the philosophical works of Giles Deleuze and yet, within its criticisms, its explanation is considered to be less than clear.ⁱ Indeed, on reading '*Immanence: a Life*'ⁱⁱ it is difficult to fully synthesis the exact nature of the concept of immanence in concrete terms and an attempt to do so could jeopardise, and thus diminish, the immanence of immanence, if this authors reading of Deleuze is in anyway accurate. So this particular work shouldn't be read as a specific critique of Deleuze or as an attempt to articulate Deleuzian space, although that may well occur by way of serendipity. This work does, however, try to capitalise on fragments of what Deleuze talks of when discussing immanence. In particular, it looks towards the notion of inherent, existing and remaining within; all of which can be considered as branches of or precursors to immanence. These tributary conditions are of particular interest within the context of the interior, the adaptation of architecture and an attempt to discover if an interior adaptation can be considered as *immanent*.



Figure 1. Neues Museum, Berlin

David Chipperfield Architects

Deleuze often described immanence by way of metaphor and contrast or by telling us what it is not; immanence is not transcendence and transcendence is not immanence, for example. The chapter titled *'Immanence: a Life'* from his work *'Pure Immanence'* begins with the question "*What is a transcendental field?*"ⁱⁱⁱ Interestingly, first attempts to define immanence begin with a discussion on what it is not. In fact, the very idea of contrast is useful to this work and is important within the context of deciphering adaptations, as such dialectics are omnifarious within this territory. Temporarily adopting a Deleuzian style, for example, we can define the inside by the claim that it is not the outside and that, by contrast, the outside is not the inside. Such spatial characteristics are obvious and are usually easily defined, until that is, you begin to immerse within a broader engagement of what it means to be inside, how an inside is defined and whether inside is a physical or metaphysical condition.



Figure 2. Neues Museum, Berlin

David Chipperfield Architects

Considering the physicality of an interior adaptation, its existence could be described as the creation of space between placed surfaces within the context of a predetermined volume without necessarily filling the predetermined volume. Perhaps it is not necessary to describe an interior adaptation as the existence of physical things, but more as the spaces established between the creation of physical things; objects, plinths, plates and escarpments. This description of the physical nature of an interior adaptation as being non-physical, of being more about the establishment of spaces than surfaces, brings an air of uncertainty to the importance of its physical characteristics and considers it to be more of an absence or as a relationship to a position within an environment. This may assist a positional shift and assist the rejection of the adaptation as a separate, singular physical act, but instead affirms the notion that it continues to be the architecture that it is an adaptation of and that it belongs to. For example, we could ask if it is necessary for us to consider an adaptation of an architecture as having a discreet identity by virtue of its own being, or can its identity be classified by virtue of its association with the host architecture. It could be argued that without the host, the physical nature of the adaptation is not fully identifiable or understandable or perceivable, yet, interestingly, it is not a copy of the host. In physical terms, it can be described as a change to the host and in continuation of this theme, if it is of the host then in some respects it is an adaptation of itself or at least of itself and the host in equal. It presents itself to us as being both itself and the host in equal measure and it becomes

difficult to define a drawn edge between the two; where one ends and the other begins. So, we inevitably begin to describe the physical nature of an adaptation as the placement of objects and things within a given context, but quickly find ourselves discussing the gaps, the spaces and absences and the contingencies, or of the adaptation and the host architecture as being one. A metaphysical description of an adaptive interior cannot be defined easily by surfaces and edges either, though for different reasons. Its metaphors are within the realms of abstract conditions and absolutes which bring about a return to the notion of being, being inside and the magnitude of the phenomenon of interiority and space. This could well be central to the practice of interior architecture as an a priori position; that it is about the spaces between things in their immensity appose to the creation of the things themselves; that perhaps it is about the recognition of participations and the spatial dynamics required to facilitate such; that it is about the dialectical relationships between itself and the architecture that is required for it to exist. If the interior requires the architecture to exist, is that, alone, enough to establish it as intrinsic and therefore as being immanent?

Deleuzian immanence is one of absolutes; that it is not dependant or reliant upon anything else to exist. It is embedded in a French epistemological tradition, including Bachelard, who we can look towards for definition within this context and that of the dialectical^{iv}. Considering the manner by which Deleuze applied the tactic of oppositions as a means for an exploration of a condition, Bachelard was also familiar with such metaphoric devices for a philosophical definition of spatial conditions; physical and metaphysical. However, attempts to attach Deleuzian paradigms to the practice of interior architecture and the architectures of the interior are not likely to be straight forward. The inability for Deleuze's *plane of immanence*^v to be attributed to anything within the physical domain precludes it from attempts to apply it directly to architecture. But we can attribute associated idioms within this discourse, as they are routed in a physical domain. So perhaps the etymology of immanence is a better place to enquire than Deleuze's immanence. Use of the term *Immanence* is traceable to the mid 16th century and from the Late Latin for '*remaining within*', it can be understood to mean to '*remain*' and '*existing or operating within*'; to be '*inherent*'.^{vi} This is of immediate assistance for there is indication that we are dealing with a condition or characteristic that is by definition an interior one. To remain within, to exist or operate within places us firmly inside and the inside is therefore the thing in question; be it architectural, geographical, political, physical, metaphysical, and so on. It does, however, allow a certain amount of application of the broader idea and condition of immanence to the subject of the interior and the creation of an interior. To be in and within can frame a discussion on immanence as an interior one, or, could begin to validate a discussion on the interior within the terms and conditions of immanence. For example, Deleuze characterised pure immanence as being beyond that of solid and physical things;

"No more than the transcendental field is defined by consciousness can the plane of immanence be defined by a subject or an object that is able to contain it"^{vii}.

Deleuze denies the application of immanence within a physical context. It transcends the physical, yet is not transcendental. Deleuze would therefore argue that immanence cannot be applied to or found in architecture or adaptations to architecture by virtue of it being an object. So the Deleuzian ideology of immanence would be misaligned if truly applied to objects within the context of this work and as such, the work continues by refocusing on the root of language. For, *containment* and *belonging to*, both conditions of interiority are implicit within the context of the etymology of immanence. In one instance, it is within, inherent, belonging to and contained, yet on the other it cannot be defined by object, space or place.



Figure 3. Georges Restaurant, Pompidou, Paris

Jacob + MacFarlane

Is an interior intervention or adaptation *inherent* to the host building to which it is a part of or an adaptation of? Is it capable of being inherent, even when it is a play on the spaces between surfaces within an architecture, despite having an alternative origin, age and spatial relationship to the host? If an observation of immanence requires the thing that is being considered (in this case, the interior) to be intrinsic and inherent (in this case to the thing within which it exists, an architecture), is it only the *original* interior that can be considered as immanent. If an interior adaptation is within an architecture but not apparently of an architecture, can it still be considered as having immanence? This raises questions on the nature of being *of something* and belonging *to something*. It is customary for us to consider the existence of a building as being constituent of an outer and an inner; an architecture and an interior. The *pure* interior of a building, the one that emerges at the point of a buildings inception and construction, is intrinsically connected to and is a part of that building for they are conceived at the same time and with a mutual purpose and language and are of the same physiognomy. The exterior skin encapsulates the structural frame and the interior skin defines the spatial environment exposed by the geometry of the frame. In this sense, the interior cannot exist without the host building for it is the host building; it is intrinsic. It is neither separate or another, but a characteristic and condition of the whole. As the building moves, it moves. The pure, original or *authentic* interior is intrinsic and inherent and is therefore, immanent. This appears to be straightforward, but is only part of the story of the interior, however. As *pure* or original interiors become ruinous, defunct or irrelevant they are reproduced, updated and replaced. The question of being inherent, of being intrinsic and having immanence becomes more complex if we attempt to apply these conditions to new interiors; interiors that are conceived after the host building within which they exist. The role of these interiors is beyond the depiction or articulation of the anterior surfaces of a building and its structure. They are of a different epoch, society and language and are often representative of these facts, be that intentional or otherwise. They continue to be the places where lives are played out, activities undertaken and

threshold and spatial definition observed and applied. But it could be argued that they are not of the building; they are placed within or attached to the building and any consideration of them as intrinsic or belonging to is more complex. So the question of immanence is perhaps related to the manner by which they are conceived rather than their nature. This ought to be considered in line with the conditions of place and placemaking and the central role architecture plays within the characteristics of place, collective memory of place and what we refer to as *genius loci*. Taking Christian Norberg-Schulz's^{viii} articulation that architecture is crucial to the continuation of an understanding of place and Fred Scott's^{ix} consideration that the adaptation of buildings is often crucial for the continuation of a building as two preconceptions, then we could begin to tailor a discussion around immanence with an *a priori* position that adaptation is an important place making device, or at least, as a contributor to place making and place characteristics. In other words, and by application of Aristotelian logic, architecture contributes to placemaking; adaptation contributes to architecture; adaptation contributes to placemaking.



Figure 4. Castelvecchio Museum, Verona

Carlo Scarpa

If an interior adaptation is conceived of a differing material, technological and spatial language to that of the host and is motivated by differing or more contemporaneous ideologies on space, material and assemblage, can its inception be intrinsically connected to the host building in some way? Can the devices used to establish itself maintain a sense of belonging that is significant enough for it to be considered inherent and immanent? There is an implied inherence, for example, by virtue of the site specific nature of adaptation and reuse. An adaptations author measures and reads the site, performs an often forensic analysis of the host buildings materiality, language, spatial coding, accent and narratives

and articulates these into a collage of contributory facets of the host building that are evidently of it and are it. The adaptation is, in its very nature, an assemblage of readings and articulations of site specific spatial characteristics. They, as individual characteristics and moments, are intrinsic to the host building and together establish what we may call its context. They are a consequence of the decoding and articulation of the *essence* of the host building and that essence is often then abstracted, collaged and appropriated unto itself, back into the context from which it was conceived in the form of a transmuted adaptation or adapted space. They are distilled from the essence of the place and are reapplied to further exist within the place. The question in this instance, then, is whether they continue to be the essence of the host context, and thus continue to be the host, or if this changing of form, language and articulation makes it something else or other. It is feasible that the adapted essence of the host site can be reconfigured into an appropriate form and language consistent with technologies, language and behaviours of its culture and still be its essence and off its essence. Therefore, the essence of the host site does not need to be configured into a verbatim facsimile of itself in order to continue to be itself. Can the adaptation be of the host and thus immanent, yet be unto itself and not simply a reciprocal representation of the host? Its intention is not to evoke the characteristics of the host, but to be an articulation of the spatial dynamics of the host towards the continuation of the host's social and spatial relevance.

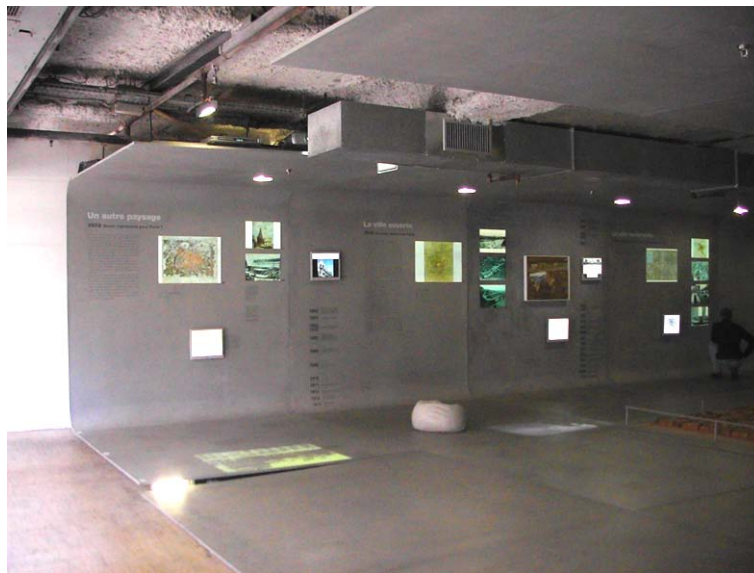


Figure 5. Pavillon de L'Arsenal, Paris

LIN Finn Geipel

“What persists through this change of state is simply a piece of matter which has no properties, or, at most, a certain capacity to occupy space and take on different shapes, without either the particular space filled or the shape adopted being in any way predetermined”.^x

In this extract, Merleau-Ponty talks specifically of Descartes' description of wax as a metaphor for an understanding of perception, but there are interesting parallels to be drawn within this debate. We can assert that the object (in this case the interior adaptation) has the capacity to take on various

manifestations, but is still perceivable as being of the host. Despite the multifarious forms that may be derived from an articulation and abstraction of the essence of the site, they are still the essence of the site; they continue to be of it, implicit in it and it, in the same way as Descartes' melted wax, although different in form and texture to its original state, still continues to be wax.

So the development of an adaptation, which is firmly fixed on the recognition and manipulation of these parts, of these characteristics that are inherent and make up the essence of the host architecture, is entirely site specific. Its origin as an idea is of that place and that place alone. The material and spatial characteristics of its makeup are both driven by extrinsic ideologies on how to make and intrinsic attitudes towards the specific place within which it is being made. This is more complex than simply making something that can fit into a building, for it is of that building. Its language, fabric and articulation are a consequence of reading, manipulating and applying site characteristics that are intrinsic, are the essence of the site and as such, the adaptation is uniquely of the site and is also intrinsic, inherent and immanent.

The inception of the adaptation, with its inherent site responsive characteristics, has a connection to the host site that goes beyond being simply referential and it is this beyond being simply referential that allows for the adaptation to be as authentic as the *original* interior. Its authenticity is derived from the manner by which it is of its time, is of the host building and is the host building in equal measure. To paraphrase Walter Benjamin, the original work is present^{xi}. Its site specific nature promotes it as part of the anatomy of the place within which it exists and it is therefore more than simply an added part to the place, but an inherent and intrinsic aspect of the place. It is contributory to the *genius loci* and is immanent. It may wear the mask of contemporaneous materiality and assemblage, in contrast to the fixed permanence of the existing architecture, but this should not be misinterpreted as being other and therefore not part of the host site. They are the fascinations of the epoch within which the adaptation was conceived, as a continuer of the building's relevance, but they do not deny its intrinsic character, its being of the essence of the host or its ability to be immanent.

ⁱ "Although the notion of immanence is frequently held to be central to Deleuze's philosophy, his use of the term can hardly be said to be transparently clear, and the coherence of his statements about what 'immanence' is, and what it relates to, can be questioned". Kerslake, C (2009) *Deleuze and the Meanings of Immanence*. p1. Paper for 'After 68', Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht, 16 June, 2009.

ⁱⁱ Deleuze, G (2001) *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (New York: Zone Books).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} "...inside and outside, as experienced by the imagination, can no longer be taken in their simple reciprocity; consequently, by omitting the geometrical references when we speak of the first expressions of being, by choosing more concrete, more phenomenologically exact inceptions, we shall come to realise that the dialectics of inside and outside multiply with countless diversified nuances". Bachelard, G. (1964) *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press).

^v It is immanent not to something but only to itself. "Whenever immanence is interpreted as immanent to something, we can be sure that this something reintroduces the transcendent." (p.45)...The plane of immanence appears as both what must be thought and what cannot be thought: "Perhaps this is the supreme act of philosophy: not so much to think of the plane of immanence as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane, and to think it in this way as the outside and inside of thought, as the not-external outside and the not-internal inside." http://christianhubert.com/writings/plane_of_immanence.html. Accessed 1 March 2012

^{vi} "immanent adjective" *Oxford Dictionary of English*. Edited by Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2010. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed 5 December 2011
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e0401200>>

^{vii} Deleuze, G. (2001) *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (New York: Zone Books)

^{viii} Norberg-Sculz, C. (1980), *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli).

^{ix} Scott, F. (2008) *On Altering Architecture* (New York: Routledge).

^{ix} Merleau-Ponty, M. (2008) *The World of Perception* (New York: Routledge Classics).

^{ix} "The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity". Benjamin, W. (1999) *Illuminations* (New Ed). London: Pimlico

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Neues Museum, Berlin, by David Chipperfield Architects. Interior, taken 2010 (photo by author).

Fig. 2. Neues Museum, Berlin, by David Chipperfield Architects. Interior, taken 2010 (photo by author).

Fig. 3. Georges Restaurant, Pompidou Centre, Paris, by Jacob + MacFarlane. Interior, taken 2005 (photo by author).

Fig. 4. Castelvecchio Museum, Verona, by Carlo Scarpa, Exterior, taken 2006, Peter Holgate.

Fig. 5. Pavillon de L'Arsenal, Paris, by LIN Finn Geipel. Interior, taken 2005 (photo by author).

